

The names listed in bold print are the newly recruited members and (SB) indicates stand-by membership. For more information about the FRN program, contact **Karen Devine**, PSBA director of member relations, at karen.devine@psba.org or (800) 932-0588, ext. 3322.

New Act 1 base index announced

A notice was published in the Sept. 18, 2010, issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* announcing that the Department of Education has calculated the Act 1 index for the 2011-12 fiscal year at 1.4%, the lowest in the history of the act. The index is the average of the percentage increase in the statewide average weekly wage and the employment cost index. For school districts with a market value/income aid ratio greater than .4000, an adjusted index will be posted on the department's website by Sept. 30, 2010.

The department's website also will include links to the 2011-12 School District Adjusted Index Listing and updated timelines regarding Act 1 activities. To access this information, go to PDE's website at www.pde.state.pa.us and click on the link from the home page called "The Taxpayer Relief Act."

State Board of Education approves new policy options for using Keystone Exams

The State Board of Education recently approved a new policy that would allow various options to school districts that want to use one or more of the state-developed Keystone Exams but do not want the scores to count as one-third of the course grade. Among the options are to allow districts to determine the weight of the Keystone Exam scores for course grades, or to completely separate scores from course grades altogether.

The policy was developed by the Local Assessment Validation Advisory Committee that was established as required by the Chapter 4 regulations adopted last year that revised high school graduation requirements.

The new policy is intended to provide some flexibility and clarity regarding the use of Keystone Exams either alone or in

combination with local assessments in each required content area. Committee members developed the policy to address concerns voiced by school officials and others with provisions under the regulations that required a Keystone Exam score to count for one-third of a course grade and that required students who score "Below Basic" on a Keystone Exam to receive a "0" score.

Under Chapter 4, in order to graduate students must demonstrate proficiency in various content areas by: 1) Use of the Keystone Exams that serves as the final exam for the course with those scores counting for at least one-third of the course mark. Students must pass six of the 10 Keystone Exams in order to graduate; or 2) Use of locally developed, independently validated local assessment systems that are at least as rigorous as the state-developed Keystones, aligned with state academic standards, and administered to all students. Local assessment systems may include the use of one or more Keystone Exams.

The new policy provides important flexibility to districts in the design of local assessment systems by emphasizing that the goal for students is to demonstrate proficiency in a specific subject area, and offering options where districts may decide the weight of the Keystone Exam score.

Districts may decide not to use any of the Keystone Exams for graduation purposes, and in such instances, those local assessments counted for graduation must be independently validated.

If a district chooses to use Keystones as part of its local assessment system, but not count them for one-third of the course grade, independent validation requirements would still apply.

Under the new policy, districts also may choose to administer Keystone Exams but separate those scores from course grades and use them instead as a stand-alone graduation requirement. Districts that make the local policy decision to use a Keystone Exam as a stand-alone graduation requirement in a given content area would not have to have their local assessments validated. Students who are not proficient must receive targeted, supplemental instruction and be permitted to re-take the exam at the earliest possible opportunity. After two administrations, students could complete a project-based alternative assessment to meet graduation requirements.

The new policy allows these **options for districts for each subject**:

1. Use of Keystone Exams in course grades as currently under Chapter 4:
 - Counts for one-third of the course grade
 - If student scores Below Basic, he/she gets a "0" score
 - Supplemental instruction must be provided to student
 - Exam may be re-taken to raise student score
 - Project-based alternative assessment may be used after two administrations
2. Use of local assessment system only:
 - Local assessments used for graduation purposes must be validated
3. Use of combination Keystone Exams & local assessment system:
 - Keystone Exam score does not have to count as one-third of the course grade
 - District decides the weight of the Keystone Exam score for the course
 - Local assessment system must be validated
4. Use of Keystones as a stand-alone graduation requirement:
 - Deemed approved for validation requirements; local assessment system does not need to be validated
 - District decides if Keystone Exam score would be used as part of course grade
 - If district decides to include the score as part of the course grade, it can decide the weight of it
 - If student is not proficient, he/she must receive supplemental instruction
 - Exam may be re-taken (pass/fail concept rather than "0" score for Below Basic)
 - Project-based alternative assessment may be used after two administrations